Summary of Information on:

THE KRAUSE MUSIC STORE

Located at: 4611 North Lincoln Avenue
Chicago, Illinois

Commission on Chicago Historical and
Architectural Landmarks

August 18, 1971

KRAUSE MUSIC STORE
4611 North Lincoln Avenue
Chicago, Illinois

Date of Construction: 1921-22

Architects: William C. Presto
Louis H. Sullivan, Associate

Landmark Site:

Lot 232 in Circuit Court Partition of Part 1 of Lot 1 lying East of Lincoln Avenue in Circuit Court Partition of West ½ of Northwest ¼, Section 18, Township 40 North, East of the Third Principal Meridian.

Significance of Building to Chicago:

The Krause Music Store is important primarily because it is the last of the 126 buildings worked on by architect Louis Sullivan, considered one of the greatest (perhaps the greatest) architect of the "Chicago School."

The "Chicago School" is a style of architecture characterized by buildings containing few, if any, historical reminiscences and epitomized by Sullivan's succinct statement of his own philosophy, "form follows function." Sullivan designed (with Dankmar Adler) such famous Chicago School Buildings as Chicago's Auditorium Building and the Old Chicago Stock Exchange Building and (by himself) the Carson, Pirie, Scott and Company Building. He is best known for these steel skeleton "skyscrapers," rich with his original ornament; yet he has also been the architect for many smaller commissions including the main facade

(or face) of the Krause Music Store.

Carl Condit, historian of building technology, is critical of Sullivan's last executed building commission. Nevertheless, the structure can be considered significant because Louis Sullivan worked out the design for the facade that fronts on Lincoln Avenue. Condit states, "The Krause Music Store has many of the characteristic features of the Sullivan designs, but it is another case of the ornament getting out of hand and dominating the basic forms of the building." He adds, "Sullivan undoubtedly had little to do with this design." The latter statement can especially be challenged. Indeed, Sullivan had nothing to do with the overall design for the building, but there is little doubt he is responsible for the front of the building. His hand in the decorative ornament cannot be mistaken. Evidence he worked on the project is to be found in the form of black-line prints of architectural drawings in the collection of the Burnham Library of the Art Institute of Chicago. The prints show a title, in the handwriting of William C. Presto, architect for the building, indicating that Louis Sullivan was his associate on the project. The first sheet, which includes Sullivan's facade design, is initialed "LHS/1/25/22". Also in the Burnham Library is a photostat of the original order for the building's terra cotta facing. It is signed by Louis H. Sullivan.

Sullivan's last completed design is not among his most famous buildings. Even so, it is most certainly representative of the architect's work. Here, as in his larger structures, may be found Sullivan's meticulous attention to decorative elements. George Grant Elmslie, who detailed the ornament on the base of the Carson, Pirie, Scott and Company Store, noted that the lavish ornament on the base of the Carsons store was designed to produce "a richly flowing picture frame...to surround the rich and ornate window displays." The same effect was achieved around the display window in the Krause Music Store. Architectural historian J. Carson Webster, in Chicago's Famous Buildings, notes that the restrained ornament in the recess of the facade and the sensitive patterning of the upper wall in this building is typical of Sullivan's best work.

Although Hugh Morrison, Sullivan's most well-known biographer, devotes only a small amount of space in his book to the store, his comments are complimentary. He says,

> ....It is not one of his best designs, but again we have only to compare it with the conventional facades of the adjacent stores which have since been built up around it, to realize as forcefully as ever that even in his least significant works Sullivan was still a master.

History of Site of Krause Music Store:

The lot containing the Krause Music Store, having passed through various ownerships, was bought in 1920 by William P. Krause and his wife Olga. Krause's plan was to build a structure with a music store on the main floor and an apartment for his family above.

William Presto was the architect selected for the job. He designed the building and, determined that the exterior was not to be like the ordinary typical flat-fronted store, hired Louis Sullivan to do the front facade.

Sullivan and Presto had become acquainted in 1919 when Presto was a draftsman for architect George C. Nimmons' office. During that period Sullivan was at work on several small bank buildings. While in the middle of the seventh and last of the series (the Farmers' and Merchants' Union Bank in Columbus, Wisconsin), Sullivan needed a draftsman and asked Nimmons for the loan of Presto. Shortly thereafter, Presto went to work for Sullivan, and the two men moved to an office Sullivan had rented in a converted residence on Prairie Avenue.

Presto, in 1963, wrote a letter describing his experiences working with Sullivan on the bank:

> ....We had a wonderful time together doing this job. We would go down to the Cliff Dwellers for luncheon and there I would meet all the greats....Mostly we used to go out to lunch at a cafeteria around the corner near 18th.

> At the time we would come out to our house for dinner. He would sit and enjoy the music from my Victrola. I would do tricks with that machine and he would listen for hours. I had the greatest confidence from Mr. Sullivan that anyone ever had....

When the bank was completed, Sullivan was forced, by lack of commissions, to let Presto go. During this final period in his career (Sullivan was to die in 1924), Sullivan turned to writing, working on his book The Autobiography of an Idea and on a series of drawings for A System of Architectural Ornament According with a Philosophy of Man's Powers.

In the meantime, Presto, when he became licensed, had opened his own office where he was kept busy designing the low-rise flat buildings which were extremely popular after World War I.

In 1921 Presto was approached by his neighbor William Krause to draw plans for Krause's new music store and apartment. Remembering how much he enjoyed working with his old employer on the Columbus Bank, Presto contacted Sullivan, submitted to him floor plans he had sketched, and asked if he would design the front elevation. Sullivan, according to Presto, is then said to have sketched out an idea--not unlike the design he later developed to scale--on the back of an envelope.

According to architect Bernard C. Greengard, who wrote "Sullivan/Presto/Krause Music Store" for The Prairie School Review (Third Quarter, 1969), Sullivan took the job very seriously and worked out the design in detail, developing it in his own hand into a set of working drawings. Krause expressed great pleasure with the plans for his building, and readily showed off the blueprints to his friends.

In 1922 Krause moved into the completed building, and for the next several years business flourished. His prosperity, however, did not last. Some ten years after he had moved in the store, Krause was found dead in his upstairs apartment, a suicide. According to James M. Coleman, who presently owns and occupies the building as a mortuary, the store was converted into a funeral home in 1929. Mrs. Krause is said to have continued to own the building until 1958, during which time it was occupied by a number

of funeral directors. On June 25, 1958, she sold the property to a Francis M. Wagner, who, the following October 15, sold it to Coleman.

Physical Description of Building:

The Krause Music Store is a small building, approximately 25' X 68'. Two stories and a basement rest on concrete footings under 4" round hollow steel columns called lally columns.

The structure of the building is rather straight forward. The ground floor is supported by steel "I" beams on 6 round steel columns running longitudinally through the center of the building, from front to back, with 1-foot wood joists placed laterally from beam to the side walls. Upstairs, the apartment floor is supported on lateral steel beams running between the two brick side walls; the beams are crossed by wood joists. There is a clear span of open space on the first floor because of the structure's design.

Sullivan's facade reaches a height of 28'. There are two main entrances: the left to the upstairs apartment, the right to what was originally the store and what is today the funeral home. The doors of both entrances were once wooden with glass panels; they have been replaced by plate glass doors with gold anodized aluminum frames. The entrances open into vestibules. Between the vestibule and the funeral home as well as between the vestibule and the apartment stair are the original wood and glass doors.

The two entrances and a large window are set back about 3' from the sidewalk. This was to provide for the pedestrian a recessed shelter area approximately 21' wide X 12' high and to attract people to the display window. The sidewalk slopes up to the window and contains a geometric pattern in white, black, and grey tiles. The name Krause is lettered in the tiles, just in front of the window.

The large window at the front was originally a single pane of glass. Today there are three smaller windows set in a gold anodized frame with medium-green rectangular panels above and below. These panels were probably added to the structure around 1960.

Originally, on the second story, four casement windows of leaded glass were visible from the street. Although you can no longer see them because of double-hung storm windows with venetian blinds in front of the leaded glass, it is said that they remain intact.

The surface of the Krause Music Store is a soft-green terra cotta. Bilaterally symmetrical, the building is visually divided by a large cartouche, or emblem, rising on a vertical axis through the second story, terminating some 3 feet above the roofline. Although this richly decorated motif commands attention when viewing the building from a slight distance, it is Sullivan's beautifully ornamented first floor which draws your notice from up close. Dense foliate ornament, disciplined by geometry, surrounds the doors and window just above eye level. Tiny carbon-filament light bulbs framing the upper part of the window puncture the terra cotta. These were undoubtedly meant to set off the window's display as well as to increase the play of light and shadow on the building's richly decorated surfaces. At eye level, surrounding the doors, are vertical panels containing ornament of simple geometric design. Below eye level there is only a narrow band of ornament running along the bottom of the window and out to the end of the building. The curvilinear motif of the ornament in this band is simplified and repeated in the bands of ornament subtly decorating the area over the windows on the second story. With the exception of the window and door changes, the front facade of the Krause Music Store remains as Sullivan designed it. His beautiful ornament is intact, for all to see.

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